

Committee on Ways and Means;

I have contacted my state's Senators (Menendez and Lautenberg), President Obama, Speaker of the House, Nancy Pelosi, news agencies, and bloggers regarding the plight of the long-term unemployed or, 99ers, which is the term used for those of us who remain unemployed after exhausting our tier IV benefits, and I am now submitting this statement to your committee to elucidate our plight. In recent weeks, I have watched helplessly as the political tide has turned against the nation's jobless. The jobless rate has not decreased. In fact, we found out this past week that of the over 400,000 were part-time, temporary, Census jobs added only about 29,000 were from the private sector, substantially lower than analysts expected. Some are speculating this miniscule job growth is an indication of a stymied job creation. Yet, our President and lawmakers balk about financial recovery, when the truth is THERE ARE NO JOBS! This is seemingly a hard pill for Mr. Obama and the legislative body to swallow as the promised millions of jobs would be created, however the statistics don't lie. So when I hear Senators and Congressmen and women, both Democrat and Republican, on television spinning such ridiculousness as unemployment benefits make recipients lazy, as if we're on welfare, and "99 weeks is enough," or boo-hooing about the deficit, I find that below appalling and a testament to how uncaring and oblivious our lawmakers really are.

The House and Senate refuse to admit that jobs are not being created at a rate momentous enough to deplete the unemployment rate any time soon. Is it another political ploy to fudge the unemployment statistics? Those who exhaust benefits are no longer counted amongst the ranks of the jobless....I wonder. So, now the jobless--the most vulnerable amongst us--have become the sacrificial lambs in the political effort to create the semblance of economic recovery and deficit decrease. We have been cast aside, evident by the Senate's refusal to consider the bill to extend tier IV before their Memorial Day vacation and Congress' conceding to extend the benefits until November and not the end of the year as originally intended. I will note, that tier V is not even being considered any present legislation relevant to unemployment.

Financial analysts and economic pundits have agreed that unemployment benefits stimulate stagnate economies. The number of long-term unemployed is a record highs and job growth is merely crawling, yet the necessity of continued benefits fails to resonate to the powers that be. The silence about this issue on the Senate floor is deafening and insulting. And, the propaganda being spewed, by both Democrats and Republicans, that unemployment benefits somehow discourage job seeking is not only insulting, it speaks volumes to how our nation's leaders view the un and underemployed. They don't care!

And where does that leave us? Jobless, homeless, destitute and on welfare I guess. The number of Americans receiving food stamps and in foreclosure is also the highest they've ever been, but I suppose that's merely coincidence too. I've read hundreds of comments online from the unemployed about their futile job searches. The attendance of job fairs, and submissions of thousands of resumes in many cases, without so much as a call back for an interview. Or the unemployed over fifty who've been refused jobs because of age or too much experience. The only consistency in the job market is that there are no jobs, and the refusal of hardly ANYONE from the House or Senate to openly acknowledge that fact solidifies the doubt in our lawmakers ability to proactively consider this matter.

The unemployment benefits are no luxury. They consist of a fraction our former salaries, but the benefits are keeping many heads barely above water, as they continue on the job hunt in an employment jungle where there are over five individuals for each available position. Savings have been depleted and the constant rejection from employment prospects only exacerbate the feeling of hopelessness. People have worked decades and contributed to unemployment benefits and are now left with nothing. The exhaustion of this income is tantamount to utter an complete financial ruin. I've read the statements of families surviving on canned food because they simply have NO income at all. I have literally sobbed after reading about the dire situation of many of the long-term unemployed and the travesty many are suffering because their benefits are gone and there is no discussion on implementing a tier V.

The good jobs in our country are gone; outsourced or simply eliminated by greedy corporations, who receive much more aid than our nation's jobless, by the way. Employers have lowered salaries and butchered benefits. People are grasping for straws, and I've yet to hear ANY unemployment beneficiary or 99 utter that they would rather collect than be gainfully employed. All we are asking is that our benefits are reinstated so the thin line between desperation and destitution is not crossed. In a stable and fluid economy, 99 weeks of unemployment would be more than enough compensation. However, when 29,000 jobs being added to the private sector is being lauded as the tide turning in a positive direction, we have to face the reality that a lengthier lifeline is necessary. Ignoring the long-term unemployed would only increase the deterioration of country's fiscal stability. I ask that you strongly consider finding the funds to finance a tier V and extension of benefits as soon as possible.

Respectfully,

Latoya Collins